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*England - Parliament - Honourable Commons - Petition*

# R E A S O N S,

*Humbly submitted to the Honourable the House of Commons,*

Against the Application for lowering the Duties on foreign PRIZE  
SUGAR to an equality with those on British Plantation Sugar.

**T**HAT the whole System of our commercial Laws, whereby the exclusive privilege of supplying the British Consumption has hitherto been secured to our own Sugar-Colonies, whilst their Trade stands, to all substantial purposes, confined, for the benefit of the Mother-Country, to the British Dominions, would thereby be overturned.

That, upon the faith of that System, till now uniformly adhered to, a Capital of at least Sixty Millions sterling hath been invested in the settlement and cultivation of the British Sugar-Colonies, which have thereby, not only in point of Revenue but of general Commerce and Navigation as well direct as collateral, been raised to the highest rank among the commercial sources of our national Wealth and maritime Power.

That the certainty of this exclusive Privilege is the sole ground of stability in the value of West-India Estates. The increase of price, which, by means thereof, generally attends the failure of Crops and the increasing expences of culture and transportation, is the natural and only relief the Sugar-Colonies can receive, under the pressure of those enormous Duties, *internal Taxes*, Expences, and Losses, with which the present War has loaded them; and, without that increase of price, the most fatal consequences must, from those Calamities, have ensued to the Sugar-Colonies, and to the Navigation and Commerce of Great-Britain.

That during several successive Years of the last Peace, and especially in the Years 1774 and 1775, the Planters supplied Great-Britain with Sugar at an undoubted Loss; for a Sugar-Plantation, once established, cannot suddenly be changed to any other species of Agriculture; and that the price of Sugar is never very high, but when some great Calamity befalls the West-India Planter.

That, whilst every argument which applies in favour of the present proposition would equally apply in favour of admitting Sugars of foreign Growth at a moderate Duty either in time of War or Peace, there is one circumstance attending the present proposition, which renders it even more exceptionable than such a general permission would be; which is, that the supply to be from thence derived, would be wholly precarious and uncertain, and out of the reach of all Regulation. When Markets are left dependent upon the natural produce that is to feed them, and upon the common accidents affecting the same, there is a fair and just Judgement capable of being formed, of the prices which ought, under any given circumstances, to prevail; but, if the accidental Encounter of Fleets in time of War is to regulate the supply, no such Judgement can be formed, and such sudden fluctuation of prices must be introduced, as would be highly prejudicial to the sober Spirit of Trade, how favourable soever it might prove to that sort of adventure which partakes more of the Spirit of Gaming.

That



That there is no foundation for apprehending a scarcity of Sugar for our own consumption, seeing that, although from uncommon accidents (such as the capture of the outward-bound Fleet, and loss of Ships in the Hurricane) a considerable part of the Crop of last Year is not yet arrived, yet what was imported was not taken off the hands of the Merchants till the very end of *April*; a Period much more advanced than that at which the Grocers and Refiners had usually bought up the whole Importation. That, besides all that remains unconsumed and unrefined in the Sugar-Houses and in the hands of the Grocers, upwards of 3000 Hogsheads of raw Sugar still remain in the Warehouses of the Importers, undelivered to the Buyers though mostly sold, which cannot possibly be refined and consumed till long after the supply of the ensuing season must arrive. Advice is received of a Fleet of above 50 Ships having sailed from *Jamaica* the 15th of *February* last, which of course is hourly to be expected. Other Fleets are successively appointed to sail, as well from *Jamaica* as the Windward Islands, through the Summer-Months as usual; and to this supply, which has hitherto proved more than sufficient for our own consumption, (for we have never been without some Exportation,) our new Acquisitions at *Demerary* and *Essequibo*, according to the accounts of highest authority, promise a very great addition. Whilst these several Fleets are thus bringing us a natural, a proper, and a sufficient supply, it is humbly submitted, that to forestal the consumption, by a Fleet of Prize-Sugars that happens to arrive a few Weeks sooner, would be the height of injustice, and not to be defended upon any principle of sound policy.

That if, by some uncommon accident, there should hereafter arise a real, though temporary scarcity of British Sugar, at any Time when Dutch or Spanish Prize Sugars are at market, the Law, as it now stands, affords considerable relief. Upon the importation of such Prize-Sugars, taken by our Men of War, a Duty is imposed upon the Captor or Importer, of Six Shillings per Cwt. which is not drawn back upon exportation, but is of the nature of a Tax upon the Capture; for the Sugar thereby acquires no right of being consumed in the Kingdom, but remains locked up in the King's Warehouse for exportation. If any one is desirous of consuming such Sugar here, it may be done upon payment of 19s. 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per Cwt. of farther Duty, whereby it becomes entitled to all the rights and privileges of British Plantation Sugar which now pays 11s. 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. per Cwt. on importation: So that the present difference, between the Duty payable for the right of consuming these foreign Prize Sugars and British Plantation Sugars, is no more than 8s. 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per Cwt. or seven-eighths of a penny per pound; a difference which is humbly submitted to be far from carrying the principle of an exclusive Trade to any length that can be prejudicial to the Public, since it would stand controuled, in any particular case that might amount to a just exception to that principle, at so easy an expence.

That the wisdom of the Legislature has provided a Bounty on the exportation of refined Sugar, equal, upon a fair calculation, to the Duty which the raw Sugar it is made of had paid upon Importation. That a very large proportion of the foreign Sugar brought hither as Prize, is manufactured in the *West-Indies* to a much higher degree of purity than British



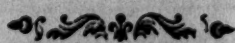
P. what is the difference between Sugar?



tish Plantation Sugar, for which alone the Bounty is calculated. If the present application were successful, the best of the Prize Sugars would naturally be selected as the object of it: They would be refined and exported at a much higher Bounty than the materials they are made of had paid Duty; and thus, instead of a benefit to the Revenue, the *Effect* of this Innovation, whatever may have been its *Object*, would be a direct Fraud upon the Revenue, for the benefit of the Individuals that could avail themselves of it till the abuse was found out, and remedied by repealing the permission now solicited; for the nature of the Process does not admit of remedying it by discriminating the produce of Prize Sugar from the produce of British Plantation Sugar, and allowing a different Bounty.

That the Refinery of Sugar is only one of innumerable branches of Manufacture dependent upon the Commerce of the Sugar-Colonies. The number of Hands employed in it may be from twelve to fifteen hundred in all; and they are, in a proportion unknown in any other branch of Trade, Foreigners, who live in the most frugal way whilst in England, and retire with their savings to their own Country. They have the refining of whatever the British Colonies furnish; but, not contented, they say they could refine more, if they had it; and thereupon they claim, that to this subordinate Manufacture, the interest and security of the great System out of which it springs, should be sacrificed. There is no doubt but the Sugar of the whole World might, in point of means to execute the Manufacture, with ease be refined in Great-Britain; for there are few operations more simple, or requiring a less expensive apparatus for carrying them on; but it is humbly submitted, that Manufactures of this subordinate nature are not objects of extension by Bounties, or any other extraneous means, but must in sound policy be left to attend the fortunes of the Parent-System of which they are Appendages. The principle of the present application will perhaps be farther illustrated, by considering how an application would be received from the Dyers for permitting the Importation of foreign white Woollen Cloth, because they could dye more than the natural Woollen Manufacture of Great-Britain produces.

Upon the whole the Planters and Merchants humbly submit, that the object of this application is subversive of every principle of Justice and sound Policy. That its success would directly lead to the ruin of the Sugar-Colonies, and to the great injury of the Manufactures, Commerce, Navigation, and Revenues of this Kingdom; and therefore that it must be unnecessary to refute the collateral arguments with which so erroneous a principle is attempted to be propp'd up. That at a time when, in addition to the local and peculiar Distresses which have fallen on the Sugar-Colonies from the present War, a new Duty on the Importation of their Sugar has just been laid, amounting to more than all the other Impositions with which Sugar has been loaded by all the Wars which have before happened, from the days of King *Charles* the Second to the present time, taken together; and when this has been done *because Sugar enjoys an exclusive Privilege*; they humbly trust, that it will not be held consistent with the Wisdom or Justice of Parliament, to take away *that very Privilege* by means of which alone the Duty can be paid, or the purposes of the Public therein be answered.





the Plantation Sugar, for which alone the Bounties are calculated. In the present application we have not been successful, the bulk of the Indian Sugar would naturally be landed as the object of it: They would be refined and exported to a market where the materials they are made of had paid Duty, and this, instead of a bounty to the Revenue, the effect of this innovation, whatever may have been its object, would be a direct transfer of the Revenue from the hands of the individuals that could avail themselves of it to the hands of the Government, and remedied by repelling the petitioners now followed, for the nature of the Process does not admit of remedying it by dissipation, and allowing a different Bounties.

That the efficacy of Sugar is only one of innumerable branches of Manufacture dependent upon the Commerce of the Sugar Colonies. The number of hands employed in it may be from twelve to fifteen hundred in all, and they are, in a proportion unknown in any other branch of Trade, Foreigners, who live in the most frugal way whilst in England, and retire with their savings to their own Country. They have the advantage of whatever the British Colonies furnish; but, not contented, they say they could refine more, if they had it; and therefore they claim, that to this subordinate Manufacture, the interest and security of the great System out of which it springs, should be sacrificed. There is no doubt but the Sugar of the whole World might, in point of means to execute the Manufacture, with care be refined in Great-Britain; for there are few operations more simple, or requiring a less expensive apparatus for carrying them on; but it is hardly admitted, that Manufactures of this subordinate nature are not objects of extension by Bounties or any other means.

To attend the features of the Patent-system of which they are Appendages. The principle of the present application will perhaps be further illustrated, by showing how an application would be received from the Dyers for protection of their natural Woolen Manufacture of Great-Britain produce. That is, the application is in substance, an every principle of Justice and Equity. That is, success would directly lead to the ruin of the Sugar-Refiners of this Kingdom; and therefore that it must be unsuccess. That at a time when, in addition to the loss of the Sugar-Refiners which have fallen on the Sugar-Colonies from the new Duty on the Importation of their Sugar has just been added, amounting to more than all the other Importations with which Sugar has been loaded by all the Wars which have been waged since the present War, the second to the present War, taken together; and which has been done by the Sugar-Refiners, they humbly trust, that it will not be held consistent with the Justice of Parliament, to take away that very Protection by means of which alone the Duty can be paid, for the purposes of the Public Revenue be answered.

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P. what is the substance of the Bill?



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